



# Focus on The Lower Crab Creek Aquatic Assessment

from Ecology's Columbia River Basin Water Management Program

The Department of Ecology's Columbia River Basin Water Management Program (Program) is aggressively seeking out new water supplies for both instream and out-of-stream uses. Two of the options being studied could have an impact on Lower Crab Creek in Grant County. These options are to develop large storage projects and to create an additional route for transporting water to Potholes Reservoir.

## The Aquatic Assessment of Lower Crab Creek

To better understand the potential impact of these water supply projects on Lower Crab Creek, the Program is funding the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) to conduct an aquatic assessment of the Creek. The assessment will answer the following questions:

- In what parts of the creek do fish live, and during what time periods?
- What are the origins of the creek's salmon and trout?
- How suitable are current habitat and water quality conditions for fish?
- What specific habitats do fish use?
- What interactions occur among native and non-native fish species?
- How would a change in water management methods affect the native and non-native fish?

## Assessment in Two Phases

The aquatic assessment will be conducted in two phases. First, WDFW staff will examine the current health and state of fish, insect, and zooplankton populations and habitat and water quality. Some of the methods to be used include:

- spawning surveys
- fish population surveys
- specimen collection
- genetic testing
- water quality data collection
- habitat quality analysis

In Phase 2, WDFW will look at fish migration. Researchers will trap migrating juvenile salmon and other fish as they move downstream, and young salmon as they emerge from redds (gravel nests on the creek bottom). The data collected will be used to estimate the extent of fish migration to the mainstem of the Columbia River.

The assessment is scheduled to be completed in June 2010, and will be part of the evaluation of the large storage and additional water route to Potholes Reservoir options. The Program is studying these water supply options with the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation. The results will be available to the public on the Program's web site, <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/cwp/crwmp.html>.



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